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ABSTRACT

This document highlights the school-to-careers (STC) partnerships connecting workplace experiences to classroom learning to prepare students for successful employment in the home building industry. First, the current state of the home building industry is reviewed. Next, the following organizations and employers are profiled: (1) the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC) Employer Participation Model (a resource for employers considering involvement in STC and education and community organizations seeking ways to reach out to employers); (2) Granger Construction, in Lansing, Michigan (educating students through career fairs); (3) Architects Hawaii in Honolulu (clarifying paths into the architecture industry); (4) Skidmore State Farm Agency, Inc., in Omaha, Nebraska (offering intensive work-based opportunities for youth); (5) Thornton-Tomasetti in New York, New York (helping young people explore and understand the needs and demands of the architecture, construction, and engineering fields; (6) Ganek/Baer Architects, Inc., in Littleton, Massachusetts (helping young people understand the relationship among buildings, communities, and the built worlds); and (7) Home Builders Institute (HBI) in Washington, DC (brokering partnerships with state associations to promote the home building field). The following strategies for getting involved in STC are explained: learn what is happening in STC in your state and community; (2) connect with the HBI; and (3) join NELC. A glossary is included. (MN)

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The Home Building Industry

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National Employer Leadership Council

The National Employer Leadership Council, an initiative of the National Alliance of Business, is a business membership organization dedicated to expanding and enhancing employer involvement in School-to-Careers. The NELC advocates and supports School-to-Careers initiatives combining classroom courses with real-life learning to ensure all students meet high standards and, therefore, are prepared for continuing education and the cutting edge jobs of the 21st Century. NELC members and the NELC Leadership Board of senior business executives are committed to sustaining the positive changes in teaching and learning taking place across the country as a result of School-to-Careers.

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Home Builders Institute

The Home Builders Institute (HBI) is the nation's leading source for education and training programs serving the home building industry. For more than 25 years, HBI has trained skilled workers in residential construction. Annually, HBI enrolls over 7,000 individuals nationwide in construction crafts training programs. HBI helps builders enhance their professionalism through continuing education and certificate programs.

In 1983, HBI was officially named the educational arm of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Today, HBI provides the industry with many vital services:

- Construction trades training.
- Job placement services.
- Continuing education for builders, superintendents, and foremen.
- Apprenticeship programs.
- Instructional design.
- Student Chapters.

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Introduction

This booklet is part of a series that demonstrates the scope and importance of employer involvement in School-to-Careers in specific industry sectors. This publication focuses on partnerships between educators and companies that rely on a skilled workforce for the home building industry. *Best Practices in School-to-Careers: The Home Building Industry* was prepared by the National Employer Leadership Council, the National Alliance of Business, and the Home Builders Institute to highlight and expand home builder involvement in School-to-Careers.

Across the country, employers from all industries are supporting School-to-Careers as a critical link in preparing students for future education and careers. School-to-Careers has brought together employers, educators, students, and community leaders to build a coordinated series of activities that provides students with a clear understanding of the education and career options available to them and the skills and competencies required for success.

While many employers are committed to improving the core academic achievement levels of all students and preparing them for success at work, employers in different industries can play unique roles in enhancing learning for specific students with particular interests and aptitudes. Together, employers provide opportunities to connect with students and help them learn, grow, and ultimately take control of their own educational and career goals.

Best Practices in School-to-Careers: The Home Building Industry highlights the efforts of five employers and one "intermediary" organization to help young people develop home building skills. While each employer is recognized for a specific activity or series of activities, together they demonstrate the need to create multiple opportunities for young people to learn and grow:

1. **Granger Construction, Lansing, MI:** Educating through career fairs.
2. **Architects Hawaii, Honolulu, HI:** Clarifying paths into the architecture industry.
3. **Skidmore State Farm Agency, Inc., Omaha, NE:** Offering intensive work-based opportunities to youth.
4. **Thorton-Tomasetti, New York, NY:** Helping young people

explore and understand the needs and demands of the architecture, construction, and engineering fields.

5. **Ganek/Baer Architects Inc, Littleton, MA:** Helping young people understand the relationship among buildings, communities and the built worlds.
6. **Home Builders Institute, Washington DC:** Brokering partnerships with state associations to promote the homebuilding field.

The Home Building Industry

The home building industry is poised for success. Over the past ten years, the economy has generated high employment, steady growth in wages and salaries, and solid returns on financial assets, prompting the production of a large number of new houses. According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), 67.7% of the population own houses and more than 18 million new housing units will need to be built between 2001 and 2010.

The success of the housing industry will be challenged as heavy pressures are put on the quality and available supplies of labor. A recent survey conducted by the NAHB found that more than 12,000 builders believe their employees lack the proper academic preparation, career guidance, and experience to pursue meaningful jobs in the industry. According to the Home Builders Institute (HBI), 40% of all trade workers hired during 1998-1999 were inexperienced or not sufficiently trained.

This problem is exacerbated by a widespread labor shortage across the industry. According to HBI, 80,000 new workers are needed to meet current workforce needs this year. The lack of qualified workers entering the industry and the shortage of talent at all levels poses a significant threat to the industry. A skilled worker shortage jeopardizes industry growth and the ability to meet consumer demand.

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School-to-Careers: Addressing Home Builders Needs

Home builders need well-prepared, job-ready workers who can think on their feet, learn on the job, and take on new challenges. They acknowledge that the key to success is a good education. As such, an increasing number are working with primary and secondary schools to participate in School-to-Careers (STC) activities. Designed to make education more relevant and exciting to all students, STC activities usually contain three core elements:

- School-based learning – classroom instruction based on high academic and business-defined occupational skill standards.
- Work-based learning – career exploration, work experience, structured training and mentoring at job sites.
- Connecting activities – integration of classroom and on-the-job instruction, matching students with participating employers, training mentors, and building other bridges between school and work.

STC activities have a positive impact on all employers, students, and teachers involved:

- **Employers** develop a formal system to provide individuals with the critical thinking skills needed to succeed in the workplace. They also achieve significant return-on-investment through decreased training and recruiting costs, and valuable productivity by student workers who contribute to key business functions within the organization.
- **Students** understand the relevancy of their academic studies and how it applies to life and work. For motivated students, contextual learning adds another layer of understanding to "book learning." For other students, workplace learning awakens a dormant interest in academics. Consequently, students take harder classes, are less likely to drop out, and are able to refine their career goals.
- **Educators** gain access to information, resources and training from business, labor, and the community, to improve education opportunities for all students.

STC is an ideal strategy for showing young people how education is relevant to their future careers. STC also allows employers direct access to those interested in developing the employability and industry-specific

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skills required for success in the home building industry. This booklet describes best practices of STC activities in the home building industry and provides valuable STC resources.

Implementing School-to-Careers: The Employer Participation Model

The National Employer Leadership Council's *Employer Participation Model* (EPM) provides a clear framework for employer involvement in STC activities. The EPM is a resource for employers and, in turn, for education and community organizations searching for ways to reach out to employers. Employers can participate in STC by working with students or focusing their efforts on teachers.

I. Working with Students

The NELC's Employer Participation Model outlines a continuum of activities, which support student learning. These activities help students: 1) become ***aware*** of the wide range of careers and the skills required to succeed; 2) ***explore*** different career areas of interest in a way that supports their academic achievement; and 3) ***prepare*** for immediate or future entry into multiple career paths.

While not every employer provides every activity, a true STC "system" is one in which all three types of activities exist for students at all levels. In the best STC initiatives, teams of employers work together to offer the full spectrum of opportunities to students. The diagram below illustrates the different types of activities employers can provide.

"Stage"	Career Awareness	Career Exploration	Career Preparation
EPM Activity	Career Talks	Job Shadowing	Internships
	Career Days/Fairs	Job Rotations	Apprenticeship
	Worksite Tours		Mentoring

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Career Awareness: The Home Building Industry

A large part of the home builder's skilled worker shortage stems from the fact that many individuals don't understand the breadth and depth of careers within the industry. Many people have a limited view of the home building industry consisting only of hammering nails, shoveling dirt, and pouring cement. Very few people recognize the advanced academic skills that are required to be successful in the field.

Jobs within the field are diverse and require a strong academic and applied knowledge base. Even entry-level carpenters, electricians, masons, ironworkers, and machine operators should have a strong grasp of mathematics and science. More advanced managerial and professional positions such as construction estimators, project engineers, and architects require an advanced bachelors and graduate degrees.

Career awareness activities help clarify the array of career opportunities within the industry by introducing students to workplaces where professionals are employed. Employers can visit schools to discuss their jobs and host on-site tours of businesses and building sites. An emphasis on the basic and core skills required of workers is an important component of career awareness activities. Employers often stress how the skills needed for success are developed through core math, science, English, and other academic courses. With the right information, students begin to see the importance of the "basics" to more advanced engineering, science, and drafting skills throughout their future learning and in all careers.

Granger Construction
Lansing, MI

Educating through Career Fairs

Founded in 1959, Granger Construction specializes in offering construction management, general contracting, design, and building services to clients throughout Michigan. Since its inception Granger Construction has been dedicated to recruiting the very best interns/employees. To achieve this goal, Granger Construction participates in career fairs throughout the state.

Specifically, the company partners with Holt Public Schools, the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Delhi Downtown Development Authority to host Industry Forums at Holt High School. The purpose of these forums is to expose students, parents, educators, and community members to the wide array of career opportunities within the growing construction industry. Representatives from the company conduct breakout sessions where they inform participants about specific company information as well as outline needed skills for growing occupations.

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Career Exploration: The Home Building Industry

Career Exploration activities can open up doors for students who might not otherwise be interested in the home building industry. Activities such as job rotations and job shadowing allow students to follow an employee at a company location to learn about a particular occupation within an industry. These experiences help students learn about the range of skills and responsibilities within a particular industry field. It is important to note that there is not "one way" to enter any specific career. For example, while many home builders do have engineering and architecture degrees, individuals from every academic background hold important, high level jobs in the industry.

Architects Hawaii
Honolulu, HI

Clarifying Career Paths into the Architecture Industry

Architects Hawaii in Honolulu actively partners with high schools, community colleges, and universities to teach students about the architecture industry.

For high school students, the company operates an intensive program where students attend 4-hour seminar sessions that detail the daily job requirements of architects. In this program students also get hands-on experience by building models of structures and sketching blueprints of buildings.

In Architects Hawaii's more advanced programs with local community colleges and the University of Hawaii, the company provides opportunities for students to "shadow" an architect two hours per week. Students rotate among different departments within the firm to learn about the range of jobs in the architecture field. For example during the first two weeks students might practice their sketching and coloring skills with the interior department, and during the second and third weeks of their job shadow, they might practice their estimating skills within the specifications department.

Architects Hawaii's job shadowing program has positively benefited both employees and students involved. A large portion of students report that their internship has helped clarify their career goals within the architecture industry; more than 1/3 of the students participating in job shadowing experiences have been offered jobs within the company.

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Career Preparation: The Home Building Industry.

Career preparation activities are the most intensive STC activities. During these activities, employers help students reinforce their academic skills and support their entry into home building careers by offering intensive, work-based learning activities such as internships, apprenticeships, and mentoring experiences. These activities stress the importance of industry-based standards, to help students benchmark their skills to those required in the industry.

Skidmore State Farm Agency, Inc.
Omaha, NE

Offering Intensive Work-Based Learning Opportunities to Youth

As a native of Omaha, Nebraska, Steve Skidmore, President of Skidmore State Farm Agency, Inc., is committed to ensuring that all students have access to the education and training needed to be successful in the home building industry. Concerned that non-college bound students did not have clear pathways into lucrative careers, Skidmore State Farm developed the "Builders of the Future" program to give high school students a chance to learn about the building industry.

The Builders of the Future Program brings non-college bound high school students from eight metro schools together to design, build, and decorate life size playhouses. As part of ongoing vocational education classes, students build structures such as log cabins and tree houses with local builders serving as mentors. Throughout the project students studying a variety of subject areas become involved. For example, home economics students may decorate the interior of the house and marketing students may write newspaper articles about the progress of the project.

To help implement the program, Skidmore State Farm has partnered with the Metro Omaha Builders Association (MOBA). In addition to coordinating with schools to find teachers and mentors for the project, MOBA also provides the lumber and supplies for the houses and structures. Once the project is built, a group of MOBA members judge the playhouses and winners receive a $1,000 scholarship. After displaying the houses to the public at the mall, they are then raffled off to the highest bidder.

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Thornton-Tomasetti
New York, NY

Helping Young People Explore and Understand the Needs of the Architecture, Construction, and Engineering Fields

In response to major employee shortages in the building professions in the early 1990's, Charlie Thornton, head of the Thornton-Tomasetti engineering firm in New York, felt the need to attract young people to the industry. With the help of other New York engineering firms in 1995, Thornton's company launched the ACE mentoring program, an initiative to reach out to high school students who are considering a career in architecture, construction, and engineering, but who have not been exposed to the actual working environment.

The Architecture, Construction, and Engineering (ACE) program is made up of companies in the design and construction industry who want to provide career direction to students. Teams of companies "adopt" a group of twenty to thirty students for the duration of a school year. Each team is organized like a real life design/construction project. For example, one team might include a corporate "owner", an architectural firm, a construction company, and an engineering firm. In addition, each team includes a local college or university that offers an architecture, engineering, or related program.

Each of the companies provides one or two mentor volunteers that work directly with ACE students. Typically, students meet with mentors every two weeks for an hour and a half after school to participate in hands-on activities such as office tours, videos, and field trips. Mentors challenge students to complete an actual design project such as redesigning a residence.

The ACE Mentor Program is spreading across the U.S. This year, 240 firms are volunteering their mentors in nine cities across the nation.

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II. Working with Teachers

Teachers guide student learning. Exposure to and guidance from employers ensures that teachers reinforce the skills and experiences that students develop through STC initiatives. As outlined in the *Employer Participation Model*, the connection between employers and teachers occurs in two primary ways:

- **Employers Working Directly with Teachers.** Direct relationships between employers and educators are critical to highlighting the academic skills required in home building and blending applied learning with classroom work. Employers partner with teachers to develop classroom projects and school-based enterprises that help students make connections to the workplace. Short and long-term "teacher externships" allow teachers to spend time at a workplace to see first-hand the demands of the industry. Teachers then work with employers and other educators to apply lessons learned about the current industry in the classroom.
- **Employers Supporting the Work of Teachers.** Employers have important roles to play in helping teachers use workplace experiences to promote student achievement. Employers can work directly with teachers to develop curriculum and instructional materials that build basic communication, teamwork, and problem solving skills. Equally important is integrating industry skill standards into academic standards to promote student academic achievement through contextual work-based experiences. Employers can also work more indirectly with teachers by providing educators with access to technology and information and support to increase awareness and skill development of current technology.

Ganek/Baer Architects Inc
Littleton, MA

Helping Young People Understand the Relationship Among Buildings, Communities and the Natural World

Ganek/Baer Architects Inc. based in Littleton, Massachusetts is committed to promoting public education programs that help young people understand the relationship between buildings, communities, and the natural world. This drive to help improve students' awareness of the architectural industry and its impact has prompted Ganek/Baer to work with The Architectural Education Resource Center and the Boston Society of Architects in their "Learning by Design" program. "Learning by Design" teams local architects and teachers together to bring architecture into the classroom.

Through the "Learning by Design" program Ganek/Baer staff works with K-8 teachers at Littleton High School to develop and co-teach lessons on architectural history and planning. Specifically, Ganek/Baer staff provides background on the differences and similarities between Roman architecture and contemporary homes and teaches basic mathematics lessons on scale and proportion. Afterwards, students apply their new academic and historical knowledge by drawing and creating scale models of Roman homes. After the models are completed, Ganek/Baer staff discusses the connections between the students' models and the models the companies build for their own corporate projects.

By exploring the connections between the skills needed to build houses in the past, present, and future, Ganek/Baer is improving students' awareness and interest in the home building industry.

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Intermediaries

Employer involvement is often facilitated by an "intermediary" organization. Intermediaries often broker partnerships between employers to ensure results and quality. They convene the key partners to determine what types of programs and policies are needed to meet the goals of both business and education. Once this set of programs and policies is outlined, they provide direct services to employers, educators, and young people to ensure that the needs and expectations of all are being met and that additional partners are recruited and engaged in the emerging system.

Home builders and other employers best respond to and learn from their peers. The natural place for home builders to learn about School-to-Careers and gain assistance is through employer associations. This is why the Home Builders Institute (HBI) engages and supports employer involvement in School-to-Careers activities through their network of 850 state and local associations.

Home Builders Institute
Washington, DC

Brokering Partnerships with State Associations to Promote the Home Building Field

Concerned with critical labor shortages and the decline in education and training programs that prepare individuals for the requirements of the home building industry, the Home Builders Institute (HBI) recently launched the "Building a House to Build Careers" program.

Piloted in three demographically distinct areas, Tallahassee (urban), Indianapolis (suburban), and Kansas City (rural), the "Building a House to Build Careers" program pairs state and/or local home builders associations and students from area high schools to be involved in a house-building project. Students participate in contextual curriculum that blends theoretical academic learning with the home building experience. As a result, students obtain practical experiences that connects classroom learning with industry competencies.

In addition to being involved in a building project, students have the opportunity to participate in activities such as job shadowing, internships, summer job programs, and NAHB/HBI student chapter activities. Those activities expose students to the broad range of career choices and at the same time motivate them to consider a career in the building industry.

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Next Steps

With more and more employers participating in STC to help young people develop the skills they need, there are several "next steps" employers can take to get involved:

- **Find out what is happening around School-to-Careers in your state and community.** Every state has a STC director and office, and most communities house local STC partnerships. Contacting these individuals and organizations to express your interest in STC will help them connect you and create opportunities to work with teachers and students.

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  Website: www.stw.ed.gov

- **Connect with the Home Builders Institute**. HBI can help you find out ways in which you can participate in the STC activities in your state.

  For more information, contact:
  Home Builders Institute
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  Email: mills@hbi.org
  Website: www.hbi.org

- **Join the National Employer Leadership Council**. NELC members receive frequent updates and resources on employer involvement in STC, and become part of a network of thousands of employers who are working together to build STC opportunities for all.

  For more information, contact:
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  Website: www.nelc.org

- **Check out these other key organizations and resources:**

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Email: info@nab.com
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National Association
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Glossary of Terms

The following terms, used throughout this publication, come from the NELC's *Employer Participation Model*, a guide designed to help employers structure their involvement in School-to-Careers. For additional information or to receive copies of the EPM, please contact the NELC directly.

Career Awareness

- *Career Talks*: Employers and employees visit students in the classroom and explain the work in their industry or company.
- *Career Days/Career Fairs*: Special events are typically held to allow students to meet with postsecondary educators, employers and employees, or human resource professionals to learn about education and work opportunities. Career day activities are designed to help students think about their interest and abilities in relation to potential careers.
- *Worksite Tours*: Students visit the worksite, talk with employees, and observe the workplace activities.

Career Exploration

- *Job Shadowing*: A student follows an employee at a company location to learn about a particular occupation or industry. Job shadowing can help students explore a range of career objectives and select a career major for the latter part of high school.
- *Job Rotations*: At a worksite, students transfer among a number of positions and tasks that require different skills and responsibilities in order to understand the steps that go into creating a product and/or service, how their own effort affects the quality and efficiency of production and customer service, and how each part of the organization contributes to productivity.

Career Preparation

- *Internships:* Students work for an employer for a specified period of time to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Students' workplace activities may include special summer projects, a sample of tasks from different jobs, or tasks from a single occupation. These may or may not include financial compensation.
- *Apprenticeship*
  - > *Youth Apprenticeship:* A multi-year program that combines school- and work-based learning in a specific occupational area or occupational cluster and is designed to lead directly into either a related postsecondary program, entry-level job, or registered apprenticeship program. Youth Apprenticeships may or may not include financial compensation.
  - > *Apprenticeship (Registered):* Registered apprenticeship programs meet specific federally-approved standards designed to safeguard toe welfare of apprentices. The programs are registered with the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT), U.S. Department of Labor, or one of 27 State Apprenticeship Agencies of Councils approved by BAT. Apprenticeships are relationships between an employer and employee during which the worker, or apprentice, learns an occupation in a structured program sponsored jointly by employers and labor unions or operated by employers and employee associations.
- *Mentoring:* Employee(s) who possess the skills and knowledge to be mastered by a student, and who instructs the student, critiques the performance of the student, challenges the student to perform well, and works in consultation with teachers or youth organizations and the employer of the student.

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Building on the NELC Agenda

The National Employer Leadership Council is a business membership organization dedicated to expanding and enhancing employer involvement in School-to-Careers. The NELC advocates and supports School-to-Careers initiatives combining classroom courses with real-life learning to ensure all students meet high standards and, therefore, are prepared for continuing education and the cutting-edge jobs of the 21st century. NELC members and the NELC Leadership Board of senior business executives are committed to sustaining the positive changes in teaching and learning taking place across the country as a result of School-to-Careers.

The NELC recognizes that as the knowledge economy continues to experience rapid change in the nature of work and the type of jobs available, an increasing number of employers, educators, and community organizations are striving for a seamless education system that equips individuals with knowledge that can be upgraded continuously. These systems will be based on defining and articulating strategies for building "knowledge supply chains" (KSCs) that help align education and training activities directly with employer demand.

The development of these systems requires an understanding of how skill *needs* link to skill *development*. The employer community and, as a result, the NELC, is advocating for national, state, and local education and training systems built on four common principles:

- A clear process to determine and understand **employer demand**. This includes regular and ongoing information on the foundational ("soft") and academic skills required of all workers, as well as the occupation- and industry-specific skills required in a variety of jobs.
- **Benchmarks and standards of competency based directly on this employer demand**. Programs must measure what individuals can do in order to ensure that employer needs will be met.
- **Certification and credentialing** of these skills and abilities that are valued and used by employers in the hiring, re-training, and education investment processes.
- Building **curriculum and programs designed to develop these competencies and leading to these certificates and credentials**.

To find out more, contact: **National Employer Leadership Council**, c/o National Alliance of Business, 1201 New York Avenue, NW Suite 700, Washington, DC 20005, Phone: (800) 360-NELC, Email: nelc@nelc.org

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